

Every "reasonable effort" should be made by the Children's Service Worker to preserve the family unit and prevent out-of-home placements for children. The selection of resources and services to prevent out-of-home placement should be based on the careful examination by the worker and the family, of the family's unique strengths and needs, the family's capacity to utilize and benefit from the resource, and the desired outcomes. Some families will benefit from established resources, which can be paid through traditional funding sources. Other families may have a unique need, which requires the development of an individualized resource. The following is a list of a few resources/services available to preserve and strengthen the family unit.

Crisis Intervention

All families experience stress from internal and external forces. Stress disturbs the family balance and may result in a crisis when usual problem-solving methods fail. Often, the Children's Service Worker's initial contact with a family will be during a period of crisis. During this time, the worker and others may be too quick to recommend that a child be removed from the home. The six (6) procedural steps of intervention during a time of crisis are as follows:

1. Make contact and rapidly establish a relationship: Families in crisis often have increased motivation for change. During this time the worker has the opportunity to establish strong bonds with the family.
2. Define the problem and assess dangerousness: Identifying problems requires that the worker ask the right questions and intently listen to the responses.
3. Find out what is happening in the family and the precipitating event: Identify the most pressing problem at the time and who is in crisis. During this step the worker should:
 - A. Avoid excessive questioning. Allow family members to speak their mind and ventilate their feelings. Model calmness for the family.
 - B. Use active listening skills with the family. These skills can be very helpful in releasing the client's feelings and defusing emotional situations.

When assessing danger the Children's Service Worker should observe the physical setting for items which are potentially dangerous or might be used as weapons. Also, the worker should observe the interaction of family members and each individual's mental or emotional state. Workers should also examine their own physical and emotional response to the situation when assessing danger, i.e., rapid heart beat, sweaty palms, shaking knees, tension, nervousness and fear, etc.

4. Assess past coping strategies: Determine if the presenting problem is new or long-standing and how the family has coped with this problem in the past. Ask the family to identify which coping strategies have and have not worked in the past. Remind the family that they have handled crisis before and have been successful.
5. Explore alternatives: Allow the family to explore alternatives for resolving the crisis. Offer possible alternatives. Allow the family to evaluate whether they might work and if they are willing to try it. If the parent seems indecisive, the Children's Service Worker should take a more assertive role by identifying what alternatives should be attempted.
6. Develop an action plan: Take immediate steps to connect the family with needed resources and services.
7. Follow-up: Contact the family periodically to determine if they are finding the resources/services to be helpful in resolving the crisis.

Related Subject: Section 3, Chapter 5.3, Crisis Intervention Guidelines.
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Resources/Services

The Children's Service Worker should be familiar with the resources in the community and how to access them.

The following is a description of services the worker may offer, or use to preserve and strengthen the family to prevent out-of-home placement.

The Children's Service Worker should view these services as a continuum, that is assist the family to identify resources within their family and close personal friends, then to expand identification of resources to those within their community, and, finally to identify those services and resources available through the state.

Community Resources: The number and type of resources will vary from community to community. Often times the creative Children's Service Worker can access or develop a non-traditional resource to meet the individual needs of the family. Interagency or CASSP teams can be helpful in locating and developing resources for families. Community resources may include the following:

- A. Emergency Crisis Fund: The fund may be used to pay reasonable immediate expenses for families to assist them in resolving a crisis that might otherwise result in the out-of-home placement of a child. Examples of such immediate expenses may include utility deposits, food, transportation, clothing, hygiene, home repair expenses, housing, medical care, etc.

- B. Intensive In-Home Services: Intensive In-Home Services (IIS) are short-term, intensive, home-based crisis intervention programs which combine skill-based intervention with maximum flexibility to provide services that will be available to families according to their needs. The goal of IIS is to offer families in crisis the alternative to remain together, averting an out-of-home placement of children whenever possible. IIS are offered solely to those families that have a child or children at imminent risk of removal from the home caused by neglect, abuse, family violence or other serious circumstances. Services provided are geared toward assisting in crisis management and restoring the family to an acceptable level of functioning.
- C. Community Respite Care: Youth In Need/Youth Emergency Services (YIN/YES) KC Mental Health/DMH placement resources (to be developed).
- D. Family Arranged Care: Respite care provided by a neighbor, kinship, church member or friend of the family may provide the relief needed for the family to resolve the immediate crisis while ensuring the child's continued protection and safety. These time-limited arrangements prevent disruptions in the child(ren)'s school attendance while providing placement in a familiar setting with persons known by the family. The Children's Service Worker will work with the family to identify appropriate respite care resources and will assist in developing a child care plan with the private provider. The Children's Division (CD), if necessary, will reimburse the private respite care provider.
- E. Crisis Nursery: Provides temporary care for children, from birth to 18 years of age, who are at risk of abuse and neglect or who have experienced abuse or neglect. Most programs accept children at any time, day or night, in order to relieve a potential or existing emergency in the family. Most crisis nursery programs offer free child care 24 hours per day for a maximum of 30 days in any year.
- F. Resources to Meet Intangible Needs: The Children's Service Worker will assist the family in arranging mental health counseling, treatment for substance abuse, parenting skill training, and/or other services that may be necessary to stabilize the family. The worker should explore with the family their financial ability to pay for these services and/or explore insurance benefits prior to authorization for services utilizing CTS funds.
- G. Orders of Protection: The Children's Service Worker will assist the family in obtaining necessary child and adult orders of protection (ex parte orders) and securing services from law enforcement. This may include assistance in obtaining temporary shelter and/or other services necessary to ensure the safety of the family until an order of protection is issued.

MEMORANDA HISTORY: